

(U) Iraqi Commander Memoirs on Missiles (6)

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(U) Chapter 1V: The Battle of Hope and Honor (1)[subtitle]

(U) 17 January 1991 [subtitle]

(U) It is a quarter of an hour after midnight. I left the calculator with its green numbers and sat on a couch to recoup what I missed in the daily papers. After a while, however, I could not resist sleep any more. So, I decided to lay down on the couch. My two young sons--Muhammad, a fourth grader; and Ahmad, who was still at a blossoming age in a kindergarten--were asleep in the bedroom next to my office. I forgot to send them home in the midst of my preoccupation with the planning and calculation.

(U) The time is 0230 hours. The calm in the room was suddenly disturbed by the sound of air raids followed by the sound of ground defenses engaging hostile aircraft. I jumped to the telephone to inquire from the Air Defense Command and other sources. They confirmed that the enemy launched a treacherous attack on Iraq.

(U) I immediately issued orders to fuel missiles, since any delay would delay the entire operation. I also alerted the strategic brigades and got ready to go down to the underground shelter, which we furnished partially.

(U) I gathered my papers and was about to leave when the telephone rang. I rushed back.

(U) Hello?

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(U) My wife replied rather tensely: There is war. You took the boys and left me alone with the girls?

(U) I tried to be sarcastic to cool her down: Yes, I knew the war will start tonight.

(U) How?

(U) Didn't you know that I was in touch with Bush?

(U) Alright so what must I do?

(U) Go down to the chemical room--I meant the basement room.

(U) She hung up. I know from the days of al-Qadisiyah Battle in the 1980s that my wife will do what is best for her and the kids; either go down to the underground shelter, or even out in the garden. I had no doubt about her wisdom, since neighbors have often commended her strong willpower and handling of situations, although she never experienced war before.

(U) I issued orders to fuel the missiles at 0345 hours in implementation of the first priority, which was to strike against military targets inside the Zionist entity.

(U) At 0350 hours, someone called me on the phone to say that enemy aircraft bombed Zone No. 4. This is the fixed launching bases area west of Kilometer 160 in the western region.

(U) The raid injured six members of the first battalion of the commando brigade belonging to the 1V Army Corps which was in charge of protecting the area.

(U) At 0520 hours, the assistant chief of staff for operations in southern Iraq called to convey the greetings of the army chief of staff to the Missile Corps men.

(U) It is time for morning prayer. I did not hear the call for prayer from the near mosque. The enemies apparently hit the power stations and communication centers. Because civilian telephones were silenced and only military communications remained active. I turned to the qiblah to perform prayer. I solemnly prayed to God to help Iraq, its leader, and people triumph over the forces of evil and tyranny. I prayed: O God, make justice and its defenders triumph over falsehood and those behind it.

(U) I continued following the preparation of the missiles in implementation of the commander in chief's order to direct strike at Zionist enemy targets. The officers at the sites said enemy bombing continued, but they were determined, God willing, to carry out the orders of preparing the bases and the missiles in places hidden from enemy aircraft.

(U) At 0800 hours, the enemy bombed the headquarters of the anti-aircraft Battalion 1039 which was located in al-Taji Camp, northern Iraq. The casualties were one martyr and two wounded. This battalion's role under the plan was to protect al-Husayn Missile sites under Brigade 224.

(U) At 0845 hours, the commander of the Operational Missiles Control Center reported that the third battalion of Brigade 225 which was equipped with tactical Luna missiles left its positions in Kuwait to new positions, where it carried out three effective strikes at US troop concentrations in the al-Khafji Harbor.

(U) At 1100 hours, Lieutenant Colonel Shabib Sulayman, the president's aide-de-camp, arrived and handed me an envelop which I noticed carried the signature of Colonel 'Abd Hamid Mahmud, the president's secretary. I also noticed that the time of dispatch was 1030 hours and the enveloped was stamped "very urgent." (more) 5 nov

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(U) I read the message eagerly as if I expected it for years. The president's handwriting was clear from the big letters. My eyes raced through the message:

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(U) "In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate

(U) "Staff Brigadier General Hazim 'Abd-al-Razzaq

(U) "Peace be on you.

(U) "Begin, with God's blessing, striking targets inside the criminal Zionist entity with the heaviest fire possible, and the need to be alert to the possibility of exposure. The strikes must be carried out with "ordinary" conventional ammunition for missiles. The firing must continue until further notice.

(U) "[Signed] Saddam Husayn

(U) "17/1/1991." [The newspaper carries a photocopy of this message in the president's own handwriting]

(U) The battle is a general one. The first enemy of the Arab nation is the Zionist enemy. Moreover, all evils and plots are woven in the dark dens of Zionism. Therefore, the faithful military ideology must serve political principles in the battlefield. It is a strong, angry language against an enemy who is tampering with the nation's destinies, gnawing at its very structure from within, and turning the Arabs against one another. So, the day has come when it must get the punishment, which is predicted in all heavenly books and is now meted out by the courageous willpower of President Saddam Husayn after depending on God. Here we are in the Missile Corps reading the commander in chief's message with pride and appreciation and putting it into serious action, because it is fulfilling a big dream, which the millions in the Arab nation have awaited for a long time.

(U) I could no longer stay in the shelter. The president's message filled us with courage. The Zionist entity is now within the range of our powerful, heroic action. I went to the Missile Corps sites on the outskirts of Baghdad to follow the preparation and give encouragement to the men. I felt very strong and ready to face of the storm. I was accompanied by a staff officer, my aide-de-camps, and my two sons Muhammad and Ahmad. I inspected Brigade 224 and its units. The morale was high and the willpower strong. I observed the same level of morale the headquarters and units of Brigade 223.

(U) At 1300 hours, the enemy bombed the depots of the First Maintenance Unit in al-Taji Camp. It hit some sheds, but luckily they were empty. So, there were no casualties or losses.

(U) I went to the headquarters of the Air Force and Air Defense Command. The building of the Operations Center was hit in the bombing. The purpose of my visit was to coordinate with the air force commander on insuring protection for the launching sites.

(U) Later, I went to inspect the positions of the mechanical units on the road to al-Taji, and later the positions of the mechanical on the road to Abu-Ghurayb Military Camp. My plan was to go to the launching sites in the western region to attend the first launching operation against the Zionist entity. I kept thinking that I would be the one pressing the button of the first missile. The thought was still with me when I drove along al-Falujah-al-Ramadi highway. My son, Muhammad, said with childish glee: Dad, I will press the button of the missile this time, not as in al-Qadisiyah when we pressed the button together.

(U) Muhammad had been with me on several firing missions. So, I can understand his enthusiasm when the day came to fire missiles against our enemies. His thoughts were bigger than his age. He kept watching through the window as the sun set down on that vast empty space without any effect. We drove behind trucks carrying launchers loaded with missiles. And whenever a truck stopped due to some technical fault, we urged the men to quickly repair the fault so we could reach our destination in the western desert as quickly as possible.

(U) Suddenly, my driver said: They hit the telephone exchanges, Sir!

(U) I thought about the headquarters and wondered who would assume my responsibility in tackling urgent matters. So, I turned to the driver and said: Go back to headquarters in Baghdad.

(U) - Yes, Sir!

(U) Muhammad was sorry. I tried to calm him down with fond words to make him accept the idea of going back.

(U) The headquarters needs me, I said.

(U) I arrived at the headquarters at night and inquired about what went on in my absence. I was told that the Operational Missiles Control Center in the south called to say that the second and third battalions of Brigade 225 which are equipped with tactical Luna Missiles, and the first (Astras) Battalion of Brigade 226, repeated the strike against US troop concentrations in al-Khafji.

(U) I contacted the western region and learned that preparations were underway for the strike against the Zionist entity.

(U) Friday 18 January 1991 [subtitle]

(U) The time is 0200 hours. The sound of enemy bombing can be heard clearly. The ground defenses are also responding forcefully, The battle is raging from one end of Iraq to the other. The enemies kept bombing power and oil stations and installations and factories with the savageness of criminal invaders. It is clear from the first moment that what they are doing has nothing to do with their declared aim.

(U) At 0235 hours, the telephone rang. Someone from the western region spoke about the existence of enemy aircraft and also friendly aircraft, meaning our aircraft. We immediately conveyed the information to the various units.

(U) At 0300 hours, Colonel 'Adnan Anjad, commander of Brigade 224, was on the radio from the western region:

(U) We are ready, Sir. But, your place is vacant.

(U) God is great, I replied.

(U) That replied meant place your trust in God and press the button.

(U) At 0310 hours, the same speaker came back and said: Listen to the countdown, Sir. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, God is great!

(U) The missile shot up. It was not just one, but eight missiles against military targets and vital installations part of enemy war effort. It was the first strike. Five missiles from al-Qa'im; three on Haifa and two on Tel Aviv; and three missiles from the point west of Kilometer 160; one on Haifa and two on Tel Aviv. They were carried out by the men of Brigade 224.

(U) There was jubilation among the men around me at the headquarters shelter. For they jumped with joy and hugged one another. The men were: Staff Brigadier General 'Abd-al-Qadir 'Abbas, head of the chief of staff training branch; Colonel Engineer Hisham Muhammad, head of the technical branch; Colonel Ghanim Ahmad, assistant head of the chief of staff branch; Colonel Engineer Majid Mahmud, warrant officer; Colonel Nabil Rajab, training officer; Lieutenant Colonel Mahmud Wahib, security officer; First Lieutenant Dr. Ma'an 'Abd-al-Rahman; and captain Faris Hazim, movements officer who was in charge of preparing and following up missile strike charts.

(U) They continued to follow the situation, while I concentrated on writing my report on the first

strike on the Zionist entity and sending a greetings message to the president and commander in chief of the armed forces.

(U) The report said: The plan was to fire eight missiles on Tel Aviv and six missiles on Haifa at 0230 hours. But, only eight missiles were fired at 0310 hours for technical reasons. However, preparations are under way to carry out the second strike against the Zionist entity. It will take place, God willing, at 0045 on 19 January. The third strike will take place at 0200 on 20 January. We assembled all the necessary materials for the two strikes.

(U) My report also said: The enemy continued its intensive strikes, but our units got on with the implementation of their duties. We had air combat patrols ready to protect us, but they did not take off before launching. One officer and several men received slight injuries due to random bombing of roads near our positions. The officers told me that some enemy aircraft almost collided with our missiles as they took off vertically from their launching pads. But the enemy planes did not see them.

(U) The president read the report, blessed our efforts, and requested that I convey his greetings to the missile men and hug them one by one. He also ordered the second strike on criminal Israel and prayed to God for protection and support. His excellency the president and commander in chief addressed us in this beautiful style: "God bless the brave men of the Missile Corps. My greetings to them. Embrace them one by one. Carry out the second strike on criminal Israel and may God protect you and give you support. If you think that the enemy is preparing to retaliate, you are authorized to delay the strike for another time." (more) 5 nov

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(U) His excellency also ordered us to plan a similar strike against enemy targets in Saudi Arabia with massive effect and reduce casualties among our men. The president's orders always reflect Arab history and Islamic teachings. His order today said: "Avoid the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. No enemy targets there must be attacked."

(U) That evening the world heard the reaction to our first strike against the Zionist entity. Arabs everywhere cheered for the long life of the leader who fulfilled Arab dreams of destroying the myth of "invincible Israel." He made it an occasion of a great jubilation in noble Arab homes. We all heard General Command CommuniquÃ© No. 4 on 18 January 1991 speaking about our first historic strike.

(U) I issued orders to implement "Plan 18 January," which as the name I gave to the second strike. It explained how to carry out the message of the president and commander in chief precisely.

(U) We maneuvered with only a few missiles and a limited number of launchers. When we held talks with the UN inspection teams in 1992, they simply could not understand the idea that we maneuvered with only a limited number of launchers from west to south and vice versa. They thought that we had double the number. Brigade 224 assigned three to four launchers for attack on targets in Tel Aviv and two for attack on targets in Haifa. Brigade 223 also assigned two launchers for attack on targets in Tel Aviv and two for targets in Haifa. The launchers available to Brigades 224 and 223 were then moved to the south to strike at targets there.

(U) Brigade 224 had two missiles left over from the previous night and Brigade 223 four missiles.

(U) Brigade 224 loaded four to five launchers from the region of al-Ramadi and move them to al-Kut for the next task.

(U) I issued instructions that whoever fires from the west must quickly return to al-Ramadi, west of Baghdad, to pack fueled missiles and move to the south.

(U) The vehicles used by Brigade 223 differed very much from those with brigade 224. After every firing, these vehicles had to pack fueled missiles from al-Ramadi and move south to al'Amarah,

Maysan Governorate.

(U) We all had to be careful when passing through Baghdad. I instructed the First Maintenance Unit not to change its position and continue to keep missiles ready. I also instructed it not to move special [chemical] warheads to al-Ramadi.

(U) I briefed everyone on the president's orders in detail to insure sound implementation. I then turned to planning the president's order for the third strike. I submitted my proposed plan for the third strike indicating that we would repeat the strike against the Zionist entity with seven to nine missiles at 0130 hours. As to the plan for enemy targets on Saudi territory, it was as follows:

(U) Six missiles on enemy targets in the region of Riyadh.

(U) Four missiles on enemy targets in the region of Dhahran.

(U) Two missiles on enemy targets in the region of al-Jubayl.

(U) Two missiles on enemy targets in the region of al-Dammam.

(U) They will be attacked on the night of 20-21 January from previously fixed positions in southern Iraq. (more) 5 nov

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(U) The leader commander approved the attack plan and sent his directives in his own handwriting on 18 January 1991 with Lieutenant Colonel Shabib Sulayman, instructing us to repeat the attacks on criminal Israel, and if necessary repeat the attack on enemy targets in Saudi Arabia. He had objection to that. His message read as follows:

(U) "1. I approve your plan to attack targets in Saudi Arabia, as well as the timing. God Bless.

(U) "2. Plan after that a repeated attack on criminal Israel. Once you have carried out the attack on Saudi Arabia on strike on 20-21 January 1991, we prefer that you maneuver with five launchers in the direction of targets inside Israel. You may then turn around and strike at enemy targets in Saudi Arabia with full force. And if you choose to repeat the attack according to your plan, there is no objection to either alternative you choose. Go ahead with God's blessing. God is great.

(U) "[Signed} Saddam Husayn."

(U) I spent the night of 18-19 January 1991 following the slow movement of our units in their preparation for the second strike. I wished there was a way for me to reach the launching sites quickly. I spoke on the phone to give them encouragement. They said that there was a heavy fog. Some headquarters officers were with me following my orders to the sites. Colonel Ghanim Ahmad said: Dawn will break soon even before the missiles batteries reach their positions, which will expose to enemy aircraft.

(U) I said with rather firmly: The strike cannot be delayed. The order must be carried out fully even in daytime.

(U) Colonel Ghanim said: Sir, don't you remember the president's directive about delaying action when conditions are unsuitable?

(U) I tried to suppress my anger. The colonel succumbed to my feelings, stood up, and spoke several times with the commander of Brigade 224 and then with the lieutenant colonel of the brigade. I performed morning prayer near my chair and God knows how I felt. The hours passed slowly. It was already morning and all eyes were fixed on me. From time to time, a staff officer spoke to the launching sites. Then Colonel Ghanim's face broke in a big smile as he said: Sir, the launching will take place anytime now.

(U) I heaved a sign of relief and uttered audibly: Thank God.

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(U) The officers told me after the launching that God had sent them a heavy cloud from the west--from the direction of Syria--that covered their movement. They said they experienced two mornings that day. Thank God.

(U) [Description of source: Independent newspaper often critical of government policies. Internet version is also available at <http://www.alarab-alyawm.com.jo>]

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[subtitle]It is a quarter of an hour after midnight. I left the calculator with its green numbers and sat on a couch to recoup what I missed in the daily papers. After a while, however

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